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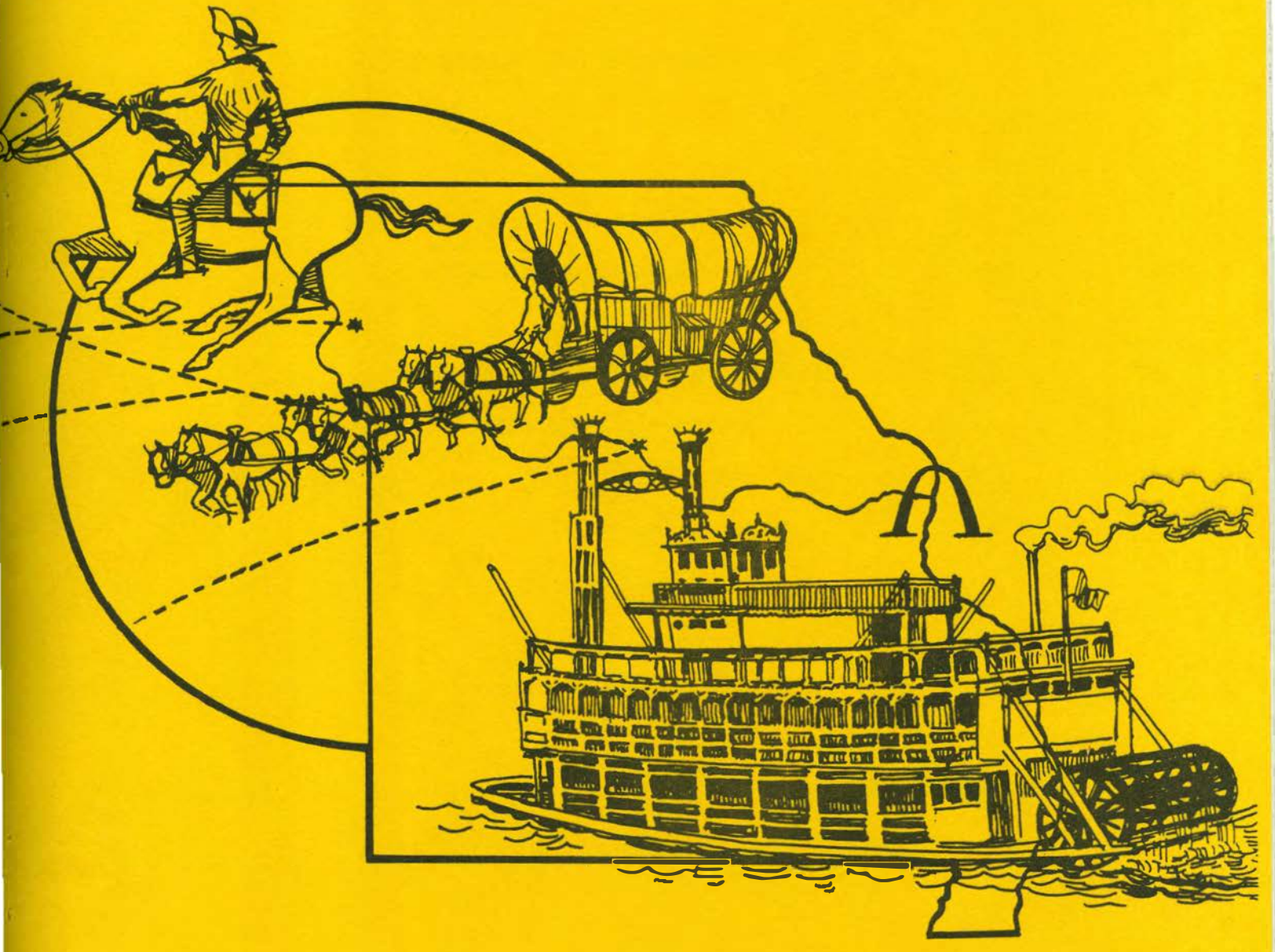

Toward the Setting Sun....

TOWARD THE SETTING SUN

The Historical Journal

of

The United Methodist Church

The Missouri Area

Volume II, No. 1 November, 1983

FROM THE EDITOR:

With this issue, we begin our second year of publication. A year ago, none of us knew if there would be a response to an area Historical Journal or not. Would there be subscribers? Would people be willing to write for the Journal, sharing their particular historical expertise with the United Methodists across the state? We have clearly answered the second question; the answer to the first is not so obvious. We continue to hope for renewed and new subscriptions. Those of you who subscribed for one year need to renew if you want to continue receiving the Journal. This is the last issue we can send you without your continued support. Those who are Life Members, of course, will continue to receive future issues without any further acttion on your part.

We hope you like the new look of our cover. Mrs. Joann Loetscher, a free-lance commercial artist, and a member of Bethel United Methodist Church in Pond, took the basic concept and turned it into a work of real art. We are grateful to her for that.

"Toward the Setting Sun" continues to be an important theme as we prepare to celebrate the bicentennial of the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the first formal Wesleyan organization in America. We solicit your prayers and support as we continue to work for a better understanding of our heritage as a base on which to build our future.

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METHODISM
For Two Centuries
PROCLAIMING
Grace and Freedom

1984 --- THE YEAR OF ?????

"1984"----the title of a novel of the future, in which George Orwell vividly depicted the loss of personal liberty; the advent of 'double-speak', a strange language in which words lose all meaning and propaganda is accepted as truth; and the general practice of thought control. Since the publication of that novel, "1984" has become a kind of apocalyptic shorthand, symbolizing the victory of evil in the world, even though we no longer expect the literal fulfillment of Orwell's vision.

1984 now has become a counter-symbol as well, as we prepare to celebrate the Bicentennial of the birth of the United Methodist Church in America. On December 24, 1784, 60 preachers gathered in Lovely Lane Meeting House in Baltimore, Maryland. Out of that meeting came the Methodist Episcopal Church. Shortly afterward, the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association came into being. For two hundred years, we have been proclaiming grace and freedom. Today we are 9,985,443 members in 22 countries, with 38,350 ordained ministers and 42,427 organized churches.

What is the Bicentennial celebration all about? It is a time for

---CLAIMING THE PAST...with its joy and sorrow,

---CELEBRATING THE PRESENT...with its hope and uncertainty,

---CHALLENGING THE FUTURE...with its risk and promise.

Past, present, and future, all coming together in 1984, to lead us to a new understanding of who we are as the people of God standing

in the Wesleyan tradition. How do we do that?

CLAIMING THE PAST

It's not too late---or too early---to begin planning for local celebrations and participation in the Bicentennial. There are many possibilities, but every local church will want to consider:

---preparing, or updating, a history of the church. The article by Richard Seaton in this issue of the Journal is an excellent guide for that effort.

---plan for a church wide study on our United Methodist heritage. Cokesbury has a long list of excellent resources. The Fall, 1983, issue of CHURCH SCHOOL TODAY has several articles which could help you with this. See especially "Try a Heritage VCS" and "Bicentennial in Your Own Backyard".

---discover and celebrate your church's unique contributions. What persons have gone into ministry, missions, etc., from your congregation? What special ways of ministering to people do you now have? Or had in the past? How were you relating to neighboring churches in the past? Did you share a pastor? Or a common ministry? One rural parish discovered their backgrounds included Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal South, Methodist Protestant, and German Methodist churches.

---discover the richness of our musical heritage. Have a singspiration of Wesleyan hymns, camp-meeting songs, and so on.

---ask your pastor to preach on bicentennial themes.

In Missouri, we have a Bicentennial Committee working to lead

us in all three phases of the Bicentennial emphasis. Professor Donald Eidson of Central Methodist College is writing an original musical on the bicentennial, which will be presented at the Annual Conference sessions in 1984. This JOURNAL, and the Area Historical Society, are visible reminders of what the committee has already done to help us claim our past. In 1985, the Missouri East Commission on Archives and History will present an historical hour at the conference session, linking the past in Missouri with a call for church growth and extension in the future. Dr. John O. Gooch, Editor of the JOURNAL, will give that address.

As a denomination, we will celebrate at General Conference in Baltimore, where the Methodist Episcopal Church came into being in 1784.

CELEBRATING THE PRESENT

WE CAN BE PROUD TO BE UNITED METHODISTS! Proud, not only of where we have come from, but also of who we are. Discover ways to celebrate what God is doing in your midst. Special days in 1984 to help you focus on that include:

Aldersgate Sunday

Confirmation Sunday

Reformation Sunday

Christmas (celebrating the Christmas Conference)

Covenant Sunday (January 1984 and 1985)

Your own special days ought also to be included. Have a 'Homecoming', honor charter members, have a church-wide dinner in honor of yourselves---the possibilities are endless.

The annual conference boards of Church and Society are encouraging each local church to begin a new ministry of social justice each year as a part of our celebration. The boards of Discipleship/Evangelism have been asked to develop an evangelism strategy for the Missouri Area. Be alert for these in your work areas and Council on Ministries and plug your local church into them.

CHALLENGING THE FUTURE

In the celebration scheme, the years 1985 and beyond are called the "Years of Commitment". The 1984 General Conference will lead us in setting goals for that commitment. Tentatively, the challenge includes:

PRAYER--the use of worship aids developed for the local church.

PRESENCE--increased membership and/or attendance.

GIFTS--a goal of $1 per member per year for the Church Development Fund, to be used for new church development throughout the world.

SERVICE--the development of one new program by each local church to serve human need in the community.

Each of us will be called to make our own personal commitment to those goals. What the General Conference--or the Annual Conference--does means very little until we translate it into action in our local church and community.

The Missouri Area Bicentennial Committee adopted the following statement of purpose:

As United Methodists in Missouri, we proudly affirm our heritage and claim our present and future for Jesus Christ. We

identify as our own call the aim of the Christmas Conference: "to reform the contient and spread the Scriptural holiness throughout the land". To this end, we commit ourselves to the following objectives:

to sensitize our people to our heritage;

to affirm the reality of our mission and ministry in the present;

to launch new ministries of evangelism and social justice for the future.

Translated into life touching life in the local church it can be a rich new beginning for all of us.

WRITING THE HISTORY OF A LOCAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Richard A.Seaton

An accurate, well-written history of a local church has real value. By lifting up the achievements and services of past generations in the church it is able to inspire pride and loyalty in the present and may suggest guidelines for the future.

The General Conference makes the compilation of the history of the local church the responsibility of the Church Historian with the help of a Committee on Records and History. (see 1980 Discipline P. 250.4)

This article suggests a procedure which may be helpful to the Historian or committee charged with the task of writing and publishing a church history.

The Pastor and Nominating Committee should see to it that the Church Historian and Committee on Records and History are elected and organized. Persons interested in history and appreciative of its value should be named to the committee.

It is helpful if an item is placed in the budget to cover the cost of printing or mimeographing the history. However, lack of funds should not discourage the committee for in most instances the funds for printing will become available once the history has been written.

After the committee has been organized and is ready to go to work, there are four steps in the preparation of a church history:

1. Gather the facts or raw material for the history.
2. Organize the raw material for the history.
3. Print or mimeograph the history.

1. Gather the facts or raw material for the history.

There are three general areas in which to search for the historical facts: 1) within the local church itself, 2)the Annual Conference Journals, and 3) in the local community.

Most of the data for a history must be dug from the church records and the memories of the members. Even if all the records were not preserved, and those you have are in terrible shape, do not be discouraged. With a patient search you have a chance to find facts that were thought to have been lost beyond recovery. All existing church records should be sought out and assembled by the committee or person writing the history. Let members and former members know of the need for old records and it is surprising how many will be found. You will discover quarterly conference reports, minutes of the Board, minutes of the Ladies Aid, of the Woman's Society and Guild, the Epworth League, membership rolls, church school class and department records, old bulletins and booklets. Some of the older members may be able to answer questions about what you find.

Next you should consult the Annual Conference Journals. Every year they are published, including statistics and figures for each church. Your church may have a collection of these

journals, but if not you can consult the Methodistica Room at Central Methodist College in Fayette or the Heritage Room at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City.

The General Minutes of the church may also be consulted. They have been printed since 1773 to the present day and contain general statistics about each church. Copies of the General Minutes may also be found at both of the above-mentioned depositories.

When a minister dies, a memoir is published in the Conference Journal, and this can be a good source of information. Our Area Commission on Archives and History has completed a minister's file, and information on every pastor serving in Missouri since 1806 may be found in this source in the Methodistica Room of Central Methodist.

Near the turn of the last century, several histories of Missouri Methodism were written. These books will often contain photos of the churches and stories about the pastors. They may contain valuable information about your church.

The third arena for raw materials is the local community. The county courthouse may be able to assist in information on deeds, mortgages, articles of incorporation, etc.. The files of the newspapers serving the community should be looked over carefully. It is advisable to prepare a list of significant dates in the life of the church---anniversaries, dedications of new buildings, outstanding revival meetings and special events---before going to the newspaper office. You can then search the back files of the newspaper for the dates you have listed and find the stories about the church which appeared in that paper.

2. Organize the raw material for the history.

Once you have examined the material and made your notes it is time to organize the material. Jot down a tentative outline and then read over your notes and rework and perfect the outline. No one outline is suitable for every church, but here is one that may give you helpful ideas:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	By the Pastor
Preface	By the author or the committee
Chapter I	How United Methodism came to our town
Chapter II	Our connectional relationships
Chapter III	The story of our church property
Chapter IV	The story of our church organizations
Chapter V	The record of our spiritual life
Chapter VI	The growth of the church and its future
Chapter VII	Our present church organization.

One person may write the history or a person may be assigned one section of the story. In the latter case, you will need an editor to oversee coordination and avoid repetition.

Dates are important and should be included wherever possible. The United Methodist Church is a connectional system and the history should name the branch of United Methodism with which the church was connected in prior years, along with district and conference relationships.

The facts concerning the buildings occupied by the congregation should be given with dates, costs, and personalities invol-

ved. If at all possible pictures of former buildings should be included.

A record of organized groups, such as church school classes with long histories, the women's groups, the men's group, the youth groups should be included along with music ministry, scouting, or any other group that has functioned in the life of the church.

The spiritual vitality of a church is one of the hardest things to measure. Some clues may be found in Charge Conference reports, reports of evangelistic meetings, and camp meetings.

One important indicator that should not be overlooked is the number of full-time workers produced by the church, such as ministers, missionaries, religious education directors, or church music leaders. A brief biography of each with dates, field of service, and a picture, would be valuable.

A statistical table may be helpful to show the progress of the church, possibly showing five year intervals. I suggest six columns of figures, with the headings: Year, Church Membership, Church Property Value, Pastor's salary, Total Benevolence contributions, and Church School enrollment.

The current organization listing all of the officials of the church is usually included in a church history. Some churches like to also include the current memberhip roll.

3. Print the History.

The cost of professionally printing even a few hundred copies of a church history may run into four figures. If the church can afford it, print a copy for every member. Some churches sell advertisements and also sell the book itself to defray

the cost. If printing costs are out of reach of your budget, the history can be mimeographed at low cost utilizing volunteer labor.

Your Annual Conference Commission on Archives and History will want two copies of the history, one for the Methodistica Collection at Central Methodist College, and one for the Conference Archives. (St. Paul for the West conference, and the Missouri Historical Society for the East). We suggest that these be furnished by the local church without charge.

Happy adventuring along your own historical trail!

OLD MCKENDREE CHAPEL

Elnora E. Tucker

Old McKendree Chapel stands as the oldest Protestant church house still in use west of the Mississippi. It is a Methodist shrine as well as an historic landmark in Missouri.

Where Old McKendree Chapel stands was the site of many early camp meetings. Even today to step on the grounds and walk among the many oak and maple trees, a presence is felt and a sense of reverence and peace is there. One can imagine, however, the gathering of people who came for the camp meetings. Often included were all sorts of folk from the community and surrounding area, not just those who belonged to McKendree. They came to visit with family and friends and enjoy the social contact, to discuss recent issues and trade information. They came also to hear the preaching and join in the singing at the religious service of the meeting.

The site of Old McKendree was first used as a camp meeting ground in 1806. No direct evidence of this date has been found, but records imply the date. The first camp meeting held on the grounds of which there is a record took place on Good Friday

1810. This meeting was conducted by Samuel Parker, Presiding Elder of the District, assisted by Jesse Walker and Thomas Wright. Other camp meetings of record occurred in 1812, 1817, and 1818. There surely were camp meetings in other years, but these are only alluded to, and no record was kept. In late April or May of 1818 the camp meeting at Old McKendree Camp Ground was attended by Bishop William McKendree. This is the only time that Bishop McKendree was at this site that is recorded.

For many years McKendree was the only meeting house in the circuit. The Cape Girardeau circuit was so extensive that it took six weeks to make one round to all the points in the circuit. Included in the circuit would be places where those who became a 'class' were enrolled and in some instances some 'preach-ing points' were established. There were rarely places where congregations were solidly established as compared to 'preaching points'. McKendree became one of those established congregations.

John Travis was the first preacher to be appointed to work in Missouri. By the end of his first year, 1806, he could report to the Western Annual Conference two circuits, the Missouri and the Meramec. The next year there were three, and by the end of the third year, four---Missouri, Meramec, Coldwater, and Cape Girardeau. This indicates the rapid growth of population on this frontier as well as the faithfulness and industry of the circuit preachers.

Old McKendree Chapel was built during the conference year of 1818-1819 in anticipation of the meeting of the Missouri Confer-

ence September 14, 1819. The description of the buiing was published in the Western Christian Advocate during the year 1843 when John Scripps, the pastor of the Cape Girardeau Circuit at the time of the building of the chapel, wrote his reminiscenses. "It was this year (1818-1819) that McKendree's Chapel was built, a good, hewed-log house, with shingle roof, good plank floor, windows, etc. It was the first substantial and finished meeting-house built for us in Missouri, by the hands of regular workmen, and was commenced and completed this year, with special reference to the session of the first annual conference ever held on the west side of the Mississippi. It stands two miles east of Jackson, and eight miles west of the town of Cape Girardeau, in a camp ground, hallowed by the recollections of happy hundreds, who have there been born again to sing redeeming love."

Early meeting houses, of which there were few west of the Alleghanies, were crude unhewed log structures with puncheon floors, or earthen floors with shake roofs supported by pole rafters. McKendree Chapel must have been seen as a place of splendor by those who served the circuit. It is easy to see why the annual conference met in Old McKendree in the years of 1819, 1821, 1826, and 1831. It provided a place of delight to those who came. The grove of trees, the spring near by, the meeting house which surpassed the usual on this frontier, all provided an ideal and welcome place especially for those who preached the Gospel.

The Missouri Annual Conference boundaries included western Indiana, all of Illinois, all of Missouri, all of Arkansas with no fixed boundary line along the west. The conference was

authorized by the General Conference of 1816 and was organized September 23, 1816, in Shiloh Meeting House, near Belleville, Illinois, Bishop McKendree presiding.

The 1819 annual conference was a notable one for several reasons. For this conference, preachers came from as far as the territories of Indiana, Arkansas, Illinois, and as far west in the Missouri Territory as the Booneslick country. This was the fourth session of the Missouri Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the first sitting on Missouri soil. Conference was conducted by Bishop Enoch George. Reports of their year's labor from each preacher and assignments to their places for the following year were part of the business. This was the first time delegates were elected to represent the Missouri Conference in the General Conference of the church.

At the conference of 1821, held at McKendree, it should be noted that the State of Missouri had been admitted to the Union. Thus, the first session of an annual conference held in the state was at McKendree.

At the conference of 1826 action was taken to settle the deficit in the preacher's salaries. The fixed salary (voted at the General Conference in 1824) was $100 a year for married men and $50 a year for single. To make up the deficit each preacher was required to collect from the classes on the last round of the circuit whatever could be raised to apply on the deficit and provide some support for retired or sick ministers. A committee was chosen at the conference to ascertain the amount of the deficit of each preacher's salary and compute his claim.

By the 1831 annual conference, Indiana and Illinois were no longer in the Missouri Conference. The Missouri Conference was then all the country west of the Mississippi River from Louisiana to Iowa and westward to the Rockies.

No one knows how or why the chapel was named McKendree. Conjectures are that Bishop McKendree often came to the place. This is not substantiated, but completely negated by the diary McKendree himself kept. He wrote down where he went, what he did, whom he saw. The only time the record, both McKendree's and others, indicate he was at the site of the chapel is 1818. The most reasonable conjecture for naming the chapel McKendree is that William McKendree was held in such high esteem and was such an outstanding figure in American Methodism west of the Alleghenies that his name should be the one used for the chapel. He was the first American-born bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the country. He was elected Bishop in 1808. There are a number of other McKendree Chapels in other places. They, too, were probably named so because of this towering figure of the early days of Methodism.

The ground on which McKendree Chapel stands was the camp ground which was on the farm of William Williams. He gave approximately two acres as a site for the chapel, though the deed was not executed until after his death in 1838. The deed was dated September 24th, 1841, and was given by his widow Elizabeth and their youngest son, William Wesley. The Williams' came from Kentucky in the late 1700s or early 1800s. The year of their arrival is not known. The first year the Williams name appears on record is 1803 on a property list for that year for the census

taken by the Government of France. He had taken up a concession of land which the Spanish Government had offered to immigrants before France acquired the territory from Spain in 1801.

The first class at McKendree was organized in July of 1809 by Samuel Parker, Presiding Elder. The word 'class' is used in the sense of 'members'. The class roll of a church ordinarily included full members of the church, probationary members, and sometimes constituents. The number of full members was not always indicated but was often less than the total number of names on the class roll. The first members at McKendree were 'full members'. They were: William Williams and his wife, John Randol and his wife, Thomas Blair, Simeon Poe, Isaiah Poe, Charnel Glasscock, and William Seely. There is no record to show whether the men listed without wives were single, widowed, or the wives were non-communicants. No class roll of the earliest period survives, but other names appear as members but not when they were received. There are records of the class roll beginning in 1852 and continuing to 1885. Except for an occasional note here and there beside names on these class rolls, we know nothing of the details of the lives of these people. During the whole time of the McKendree class, the class leader was a Williams. The first leader was William Williams (1809-1838). His son Isaac succeeded him (1839-1858). Isaac's son, Jacob, succeeded him, and served from 1859 on. Jacob was known as 'Uncle Jake' and was a beloved leader who served during a very difficult time for the chapel.

The division of the Methodist Church in 1844-45 in Northern

and Southern branches was a time of heartbreak in McKendree Chapel. Nelson Henry, Presiding Elder, and the Preacher-in-Charge, John K. Lacy, were divided in their vote at a Quarterly Meeting held at McKendree Chapel in 1844. When a call was made for mourners, several members joined Rev. Henry on the North bench and the remainder (majority) joinged John Lacy on the South bench. Nelson was a firm advocate of adherence to the Methodist Episcopal Church when the division was at issue. At the Missouri Conference in the autumn of 1844, he was one of only seven English--speaking ministers who voted to remain with the North church when the vote was taken. Thirteen German-speaking preachers so voted and requested to be transferred to the Illinois Conference. Even though the majority of the McKendree members voted to adhere to the South church, the fact is that Nelson Henry stood so firmly and had such great influence that he was able to hold McKendree in the M.E. church body against the vote of the majority. He continued as Presiding Elder until 1850, and may have served as Pastor, too. He directed and influenced McKendree Chapel for the entire critical decade from 1844-54.

During this period McKendree paid a dear price for its loyalty to the North church. It was located in an area many of whose first settlers were from the southern states. The Civil War came on and every facet of life was disrupted, both civic and religious. McKendree Chapel suffered more than perhaps other churches and might have closed its doors if it had not been for Nelson Henry in the 1840s and 50s and the leadership and devotion of "Uncle Jake" Williams in the war years and afterward. The Class Roll fluctuated in the years between 1853 and 1883. There

were instances noted where there were 'reorganization' attempts, in 1862 and again in 1868. The local Methodists were moving toward the South church and these churches were growing in number and strength. In Jackson and Cape Girardeau the Southern churches grew increasingly and in the churches in both places, the first members were from Old McKendree families.

The North churches were so scattered in Missouri that by 1849 Old McKendree Chapel was included in the St. Louis District and the old circuit was listed as the Cape Girardeau Mission. It was no longer a self-supporting circuit, but mission funds were appropriated for the chapel. Even as a part of the mission McKendree Chapel always came up with and met fully its financial obligations without outside help. Services on a regular basis were discontinued around 1890.

Sunday School at Old McKendree had its ups and downs. It was difficult to establish a Sunday School anywhere in the frontier churches because of bad roads and the distances 'scholars' had to travel, and in some instances, the scarcity of regular church services. Most of the Sunday Schools opened in the spring and closed in the fall. Each pastor was responsible for the religious welfare of the children in his charge and he was required to report on this in the Quarterly Conference at least once each year. In those days greater emphasis was placed on the parents training the children than upon instruction in the classes of a Sunday School. At Old McKendree the first Sunday School was reported in July of 1851; none was reported in December at the Quarterly Meeting of that year. In 1853 one Sunday School

was reported with 50 scholars, a superintendent, and one secretary. In August of 1855 there were four Sunday Schools reported with 16 officers and teachers, 200 scholars, and 350 books in the libraries. By November there was even an increase in teachers and officers. In 1857 only two Sunday Schools existed. By April of 1858 only one Sunday School was reported at the chapel. During the Civil War only occasional services were conducted, Quarterly Conferences were not held in the Circuit with regularity and no minutes were recorded between 1862 and 1866. Sunday Schools had virtually disappeared.

The Chapel was used as a school building probably as early as 1831. The early school at the Chapel was likely a Subscription School which was common in that time before public schools were established. The first recorded request for use of the Chapel as a school house was found in the Quarterly Conference minutes of November of 1874. The School Board was permitted to use the Chapel with certain specified conditions, such as repair, etc., for a period no longer than twenty years. The church reserved the right to hold services on Sunday and such times as when not occupied by the school.

It cannot be determined accurately when the last regular service at Old McKendree was, but the approximate date is 1890. The Methodist Episcopal Church could not continue to provide support for a pastor. In 1877 the salary was set at $600, in 1879 at $300, and in 1880 at $200. These amounts were in addition to the mission aid. The last regular service was held following the death of Mrs. Jacob Williams in June, 1888. After that the pastor of the Methodist Church in Jackson would go one

Sunday afternoon a month and preach at Williams School House, as it was often referred to by then. In spite of irregular pastoral care, special services were held at the Chapel, revival meetings, preaching services where two or three pastors would preach during the day, baptisms, and weddings.

In September of 1910, the St. Louis Annual Conference of the M. E. Church, South, convened in Jackson. A special session was held in McKendree Chapel. Again in 1916 this Conference met at the Chapel. It was the celebration of the one hundredth year of the organization of the Missouri Conference and most appropriate that it was held at Old McKendree. It was a service of commemoration and was attended by more than 200. In 1918 a one-day camp meeting at the Chapel was sponsored by the Methodist ministers of the Cape Girardeau District.

Even though meetings and special services were held from time to time, age, weather, and neglect took their toll. Small animals and birds took over the Chapel, the undergrowth took over the yard, the building became an abandoned holy place.

In 1926 interest was aroused in the renovation and restoration of the building. The Rev. William Stewart, pastor of New McKendree in Jackson, undertook the job of enlisting support and aid. Though lack of financial support prevented accomplishing all the aims, the grounds were cleared, the lane from the Bainbridge Road to the Chapel was purchased (it had been private property), and the lane was surfaced with gravel.

Again in 1929, on June 23, a service was held and a large audience came to hear Bishop Waldorf preach. This service gave a

great impetus to a program of restoration. The depression soon came, but even in those hard times interest, dedication, and support were given and the McKendree Chapel Memorial Association was formed. The purpose was to complete the restoration and preservation of the Chapel. Memberships in the Association were sold for $10 each and over 100 memberships were sold. The Association was chartered on November 10, 1933. With the funds from the memberships the restoration was begun. New stone piers were put in place, joists installed where needed, new floor of oak planks laid, the old fireplace rebuilt, rafters replaced, and a new hand made cypress
roof was put on. Replacements were obtained from old houses and barns and used in the restoration whenever possible. A service of dedication was held on October 15, 1933, after this part of the restoration was completed. There were about 2000 people in attendance at this service.

It should be noted that McKendree Chapel became a point of reunion of the churches which had separated in 1844-45. In its session of 1926 the Missouri Conference of the M.E. Church voted to deed a one-half interest in the Chapel to the St. Louis Conference of the M.E. Church, South. This was done and the deed is dated July 25, 1927. This was one of the first of several moves toward unification of the churches which was consummated in the Uniting Conference of 1939.

In recent years from time to time various groups, Sunday School classes, women's groups, men's groups and youth have met on the grounds and continue to use the Chapel. There is a service of Commemoration held annually. Only a few times since 1933

has the service been missed, once by omission, twice cancelled because of weather, and those years interrupted by the Second World War. There are usually 500 to 1000 or more who attend these services and have kept alive the plan of restoring and preserving the Chapel for the future. Many great preachers and personalities have spoken at these meetings, and many people have given their time and money towards the effort to preserve the building and grounds.

In 1958 about $12,000 was raised in private gifts. This went to further restore and protect the Chapel. An all-steel canopy was put over the Chapel, the inside and outside of the entire building

was covered with a transparent fire-resistant material, a concrete fire break was laid around the building, and additional ground adjacent to the church yard was purchased to provide parking space. In 1960 after another fund raising campaign was undertaken, a caretaker's house was built and the grounds beautified. The spring which had almost ceased to flow was cleaned out and water now flows again. It is no longer used for drinking purposes but has been preserved for those to see when they visit the grounds. In 1975 funds from the sale of the Zalma United Methodist Church provided for a deep well which made possible building rest room facilities.

In 1977 the weatherboarding which had been put on the Chapel many years before was removed and the exposed original logs were treated for termite damage and new chinking was put between the logs. Some of the logs are 30 inches or more wide and are as

long as the building. Other repairs were made and the inside of the church was whitewashed. Plans were expressed for replacing the pews with replicas of the first ones used (only a few survived), and a new pulpit to more nearly match the appearance of the original one. The possibility of a museum in the future was talked about.

In the last two years the old cemetery located down the lane from the Chapel and across the old Bainbridge Road has been cleared of weeds and young trees. The stones, when possible, have been cleaned and replaced, and the passageway to the cemetery has been improved for easier access. Maintenance and other improvements of the cemetery are an ongoing project. Last year inquiries were started into the possibility of using some of the land adjacent to the church yard to establish a cemetery for use in the future for present-day retired Missouri Methodist ministers and spouses for their burial if they desire.

In his book Old McKendree Chapel, Frank C. Tucker concludes his writing by saying; "The completion of present plans will enable this, the oldest Protestant Church building west of the Mississippi, to continue its inspiring ministry throughout the years of the future. It is fitting that tourists should come from the North and East and West and South to the very spot where pioneer preachers dreamed their dreams and made their plans for the Gospel-conquest of regions where now a high civilization exists but then were wilderness to be conquered. This account cannot, therefore, come to an end, though the writing of it must cease for the present. There still remains to be told the story of the tomorrows of Old McKendree Chapel."

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Frank C. Tucker, Old McKendree Chapel, Limited Edition (Cape Girardeau: Missourian Lith & Printing Co., 1959)

Jim Steele, "New Life for Old McKendree", The United Methodist Reporter, 19 August 1977, cols. 3-4.

ABRAM STILL: MISSIONARY TO THE WEST

Ruth Warner Towne

The life of Abram Still typifies the saga both of American pioneers and Methodist preachers who rode the circuits of successive frontiers. Born in Buncombe county, North Carolina on August 25, 1796, he was the son of Boaz and Mary Lyda Still, about whom little is known. Boaz Still represented the third generation of the family in America, his grandfather having migrated from England earlier in the eighteenth century. Boaz's father, Samuel Still, fought the British in the Revolu -tion and fathered eight sons. They must have been a formidable octet for legend claims that Boaz, who weighed over 200 pounds, was the 'runt of the family'. He married Mary Lyda of Dutch parentage; she won local renown for her skill in handling a rifle. This amazing pair produced fifteen children, eight daughters and seven sons, one of whom they named Abram. (1)

While the family was living on the border of Virginia and the new state of Tennessee, Abram, then fifteen, was conver ted by a Methodist preacher. Not only did the boy accept the Methodist faith, but he became convinced that he had been called to preach. In 1818 he was admitted on trial by the Holston Conference; three years later he was ordained a deacon by Bishop William McKendree; and in 1824 he became an elder.

Meanwhile, he had received annual appointments first in the Tazewell Circuit, then at Little River, next at Clinch, followed by Holston, and then another year at Tazewell. In 1825 he was located at Jonesville in Lee County, Virginia where he remained until 1833, the longest time he ever spent in one place during his entire ministry. (2)

In 1822 Still married Martha Poage Moore, daugher of James and Barbara Taylor Moore. Martha was born in Tazewell county, Virginia on January 28, 1800. She proved to be an ideal helpmate for a frontier preacher. She and Abram had nine children, five sons and four daughters. (3)

While at Jonesville Abram Still began the study of medicine. He explained this step as a way that he might minister to physical aswell as spiritual ills and as a means of better providing for his growing family, the meager earnings of a Methodist circuit rider being insufficient by themselves. He also farmed and engaged in the type of land speculation common to the frontier. The plentiful supply of cheap land as yet untouched by the plow offered the enterprising American of the nineteenth century an opportunity for advancement. While he converted the wilderness into farmland, he could make a living and create a marketable commodity. The second wave of migrants into a frontier area would pay for the work done by the first settlers. Hence, like many of his neighbors, Abram Still's thoughts turned to going west.

A further considertion in his case was provided by the fears current in the East that the lack of preachers and chur-

ches in the West threatened a lapse into barbarism. To this concern the Methodists had an answer. The system of itinerant ministers
had met the need in the frontier of the Appalachians and the Ohio valley; it could surely adapt to the land across the Mississippi. Thus mindful of his desire to begin anew the quest for material advancement and of his calling to go "into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature", Still applied to the Holston Conference for transfer to Missouri, and his request was granted in 1837 (4). His preparations were quickly made and in a short time Abram, Martha, and the six children they had then left New Market, Tennessee traveling in two wagons with seven horses. It took them seven weeks to reach their destination in Macon County in northeastern Missouri. At first the journey was fairly pleasant as the roads were reasonably good until the party reached the Ohio River bottom near Cairo, Illinois, where the mud was so deep that it was necessary to hire a guide to lead them through the morass. If a wagon had gone off the road even a few feet, it might have disappeared into the seemingly bottomless mire. At Cairo the children had a treat for they got to see a steamboat. As they neared the river, the travelers met a man who reported that a steamboat had tied up at the landing. Still six or seven miles away they heard the whistle and the children urged their father to whip up the teams for fear the boat would escape them. However, as they drove up the banks of the river, there was the ship loaded with people, cattle, horses, sheep, and merchan
-dise, puffing out steam as it prepared to go up the river. To

the great delight of the children, a steam ferry later took them across the Mississippi to St. Louis. The second encounter with steam propulsion convinced the younger Stills that they were now truly ready for their mission to north Missouri; they could not only save the heathen but could tell them all about steam navigation (5).

The travelers were exhausted by the time they reached St. Louis, so Still decided that it would be wise to rest for a few days. As was the custom, he looked up the Methodist preacher in the city and asked for shelter. The latter was delighted to have Brother Still and family as guests and solicitous for their welfare. Did they have sufficient funds for the remaining journey? When Still guilelessly replied that he had more than $700, his host began a sad tale of his own nearly penniless state. The result was that Abram Still lent the St. Louis pastor $700 on an unsecured note calling for repayment in six months. When the Stills departed for north Missouri, they did so with their host's "God bless you" ringing in their ears. (6)

Fortunately Martha had an additional $300 in the little bag she carefully clutched, but that had to cover further travel costs, the purchase of land, and living expenses until the first year's harvest. It was lucky that the frugal Martha had kept part of the savings because it was eight years before the $700 was repaid, and then nothing was said about interest. Although some members of his family were not so charitable, Abram Still refused to condemn his brother pastor (7).

Still's assignment was to the Macon Mission centered at Bloomington. When he andhis family arrived at the tiny village, they discovered that the commissioners had just designated it the county seat for the newly created Macon county. Only an hour before, the stakes had been driven to mark the town site and the location of a future courthouse. At that time the county included, in addition to its present area, the territory north to the Iowa line and west to what is now the boundary of Mercer county. (8)

Still bought land near Barnesville in Independence township, but with winter approaching little could be done except to erect a log cabin and prepare for the cold weather. Their clothes were worn out, but their money was gone so they tanned deerskins from which they made mocassins, pants, and jackets. As the weather permitted, work was begun on clearing the land. At last spring arrived and Still, assisted by his three older sons, put in some crops. Then, leaving his wife to manage the farm, he mounted his horse and started across the wilds to preach the gospel to the settlers. Martha could take care of the farm as well as her husband or perhaps a little better---and that in addition to spinning, weaving, sewing, butchering, making soap, drying and preserving food, and a myriad of other tasks. She was a strong and determined woman with a firm jaw and keen senses. She believed that "to spare the rod was to spoil the child", one of her sons recalled (9).

When Abram Still began his ministry in north Missouri he was the first Methodist preacher in the area. Although

Missouri had been a state for seventeen years, much of the land near the Iowa border was unsurveyed, unmapped, and sparsely settled. There were no roads, only trails that followed the paths of deer and buffalo over which the Indians had tramped. What must the wild things of the forest have thought when they saw the tall spare form of the circuit rider clad in his sober black with his wide-brimmed black hat? A charcoal portrait of Abram Still made not long after his first preaching trips in Missouri shows a narrow face made to appear even longer than it was by the relatively short-cut, bushy hair style reminiscent of Andrew Jackson much affected by the men of the 1830's. The eyes had an intense burning look which one later commentator exaggeratedly likened to the expression of John Brown. One of Still's daughters recalled her father as resembling Abraham Lincoln (10).

As the circuit rider traveled his first route he had to improvise. Whenever he encountered people, he summoned them from their fields and household tasks to gather for a preaching service. Whether Methodist, Baptist, Cumberland Presbyterian, or of no particular faith, the settlers responded eagerly. The circuit rider represented not only a man of God but someone of more education and wider experience, and above all he brought contact with the outside world. In his saddle bags along with a change of linen and some bread and meat for a meal when no host family had been reached, he carried books. He would leave a few to be read with close attention and discussed with

excitement in his absence and exchanged for other volumes when he returned. On the day of his coming he offered respite from grueling labor. As a few people gathered, followed by a dog or two, and probably some pigs and chickens, the preacher would begin with an old hymn. Then he launched into his sermon intermingled with Bible verses and more songs. At the conclusion he invited his hearers to make their commitment to Methodism, and if the response warranted, he organized a class, selecting a leader to be in charge. Such leaders generally acted as hosts for the itinerant minister on his return and took the responsibility of notifying more distant settlers of the probable time of the next preaching service. In the minister's absence, prayer and Bible study sessions were held at the leader's house. Such classes might become more formal congregations as time passed and more settlers were enrolled. To have a special building, albeit only another log cabin, to serve as church and schoolhouse was the goal of every frontier community. Such a structure symbolized progress toward civilization.

Abram Still's circuit was so extensive that it took him six to seven weeks to cover it. After a short time with his family catching up on tasks on the farm he would be off again. It was soon learned that he had in his saddle bags some things not usually carried by circuit riders----medicines for the sick.So as he entered a clearing those suffering from fevers, broken bones, burns, snake bites, and other ailments, were brought to him, and he healed the afflicted as best he could.

And he made converts. His labors marked the beginning of Methodist congregations at Bloomington, Bellview, and Bethlehem. In 1839 the Missouri Conference sent him to the Goshen Mission where he spent two years in the same endeavors. He was then appointed in succession to the Waterloo Circuit, the Edina Circuit, and Spring Creek Mission. (11)

In 1840 Still and another Methodist preacher named Jesse Green held the first camp meeting in the northernmost part of Missouri in the Battle Creek area of what is today Schuyler county. It was considered a great success. (12) It may also have given Still ideas for another project. While riding over the trackless wilderness, he kept a watchful eye for potential farm sites. The farm in Macon county was coming along well enough to be sold as improved land with a considerable increase over virgin land prices. With the money obtained from it he could buy new land, develop it, and sell it. Since clearing land, bringing it under cultivation, erecting buildings and fences, and digging wells was hard work, the proceeds of speculation could hardly be called unearned increment, but they constituted the road to the American dream of success. So pervasive was the success ethos that Abram Still saw no harm in such activity or any conflict with his clerical role. Somewhere about the time that the Missouri General Assembly organized Schuyler county as a separate entity, Still purchased eighty acres of land there and moved his family to the new site. Apparently this venture did not fare well, for by 1845 the Stills were again living in Macon county. (13) One can

only surmise the reason; perhaps the land proved less productive than anticipated.

What is clear is that Still had reached a crisis in his relationship to Methodism, a crisis brought on by the great issue of slavery. Although a southerner, Abram Still was a determined opponent of slave-holding. He was a product of the Cumberland Mountains where little sympathy for the institution existed. In addition, the religious works he read in his pastoral studies reinforced his hostility, and he became firmly convinced that no person had the right to own another. In his republican creed, liberty was a divinely ordained condition for all human beings regardless of color or race. Initially Still's attitude caused no difficulty, but by the mid 1840's a situation developed which divided Methodists irrevocably. In 1844 the General Conference ordered a southern bishop to divest himself of his slaves or give up his office. This produced the secession of the southern delegates and the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church South. In a border state like Missouri where slavery was a legal but not very strong institution, individual ministers and congregations had to decide with which organization they would cast their lot. For Still the choice was clear; he would remain true to his allegiance to the Methodist Episcopal Church. (14)

That placed him among the minority in Missouri Methodism. Most of the ministers seemed to feel it incumbent upon them as inhabitants of a slave state to go with the new body, although it is not clear that a majority of their parishioners so

desired. Missourians were already divided on the issue of slavery. There were fire-eating supporters and vociferous abolitionists, but probably a far greater number of the state's population had not yet reached a conclusion or were lukewarm on either position. Nonetheless Still's decision was unpopular with many of his closest associates. Fellow ministers remonstrated with him and some of the proslavery extremists threatened him. He stood firm and continued to teach that slavery was a sin, but his position was tenuous since the conference was dominated by his enemies. Therefore he applied to the Iowa Conference for affiliation and was received in 1845.(15)

Three years later the Belleville Conference appointed him Presiding Elder of the Platte District which included portions of western Missouri and eastern Kansas. Actually Kansas was as yet unorganized territory, so only a few settlers were to be found there. The main thrust of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Kansas up to that time had been a mission to the Shawnee Indians established in 1830 near what later became Turner. The director of the mission in 1844, a proslavery adherent named Johnson, promptly took the mission into the Methodist Episcopal Church South. As Presiding Elder, Still became interested in the possibilities of the mission and appealed for its reinstatement. In 1851 the Belleville Conference named Still Superintendent of the Indian Mission. (16)

Still left immediately for Kansas. He chose a quarter section of land at the mouth of the Wakarusa where the town of

Eudora was later built. With the help of some of the Shawnee tribesmen he fenced the land and erected a two-story log house to serve as school, church, and dwelling for the family when they joined him. In March he returned to Missouri to get them. This time three wagons were used, and the cattle and chickens were driven by the older children who took turns walking and riding horseback. The two oldest sons, married and with families of their own, remained in Missouri, but the third son, Andrew Taylor Still, and his wife and their two children moved with his parents to Kansas. Andrew had studied medicine under his father so he assisted in the medical mission to the Shawnee while his wife, Mary M. Vaughn Still, taught in the school, which had about thirty pupils at all levels from beginning to the eighth grade. (17)

Within a short time of the arrival of his family Abram Still resumed his practice of taking up land, improving it somewhat, and selling to buy more. Sometimes his operations were successful; sometimes they were not. In one case a claim, which he had begun to develop by putting up a one-room cabin and some fences, was jumped by a newcomer from Pennsylvania. Ironically, Still had found the man, dazed, ill and lost and had taken him home to nurse him through a mysterious disease involving severe inflammation of the eyes. The whole affair proved disastrous. The Still family caught the disease; the man behaved like a tyrant, threatening the three youngest children if they did not wait on him constantly; and when he was able to leave, he moved into the cabin Still had put up on

his claim. Still's sons were eager to drag the intruder out of the cabin and throw him into the river, but Still would not hear of violence. "There is too much vacant land to fight over it," Still reasoned. (18)

Once again Abram Still found himself caught up in the vortex of the slavery controversy. Under the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 the territorial legislature, when the population warranted a representative assembly, would decide whetherslavery was to be permitted in the territory or not. This arrangement led those Missourians who believed that legalization in Kansas was essential to the survival of the institution in Missouri to attempt to decide the issue by force. They crossed the border into Kansas on the eve of elections to vote for advocates of slavery. To replace their lack of residence qualifications they took their guns. Catching the free-soilers by surprise and aided by the proslavery governor appointed by the 'doughface' Pierce administration, the Missourians were successful in electing a legislature which adopted one of the strictest slave codes in the nation. Free-soilers throughout the North rallied behind those in Kansas who were determined to make it ultimately a free state. Soon Kansas was in the throes of warfare; some of it was ideologically motivated; some of it grew out of the conflicts over land common to every frontier; some of it represented the outlaw element ever present just below the surface in society. Gangs of ruffians plundered and burned because a condition of anarchy invited them to do so. Given

the passion over slavery, the other causes of disorder polarized the people.

Abram Still was not immune from these influences; his revulsion to slavery made him see the whole situation in Kansas in moral terms. Soon after the territory was organized and surveys begun, the land on which the mission was located was awarded to an Indian and the religious and educational work was terminated by a treaty with the Shawnee. Still believed that the action had been revenge for his denunciation of slavery and its adherents. (19) He and his family became leaders of the free-soil faction; his sons joined the home guard and his wife with other women in the cause maintained watches against the coming of the Border Ruffians. (20)

After the Indian Mission closed in 1854, Still returned to active connection with the Kansas Conference which appointed him Presiding Elder of the South Kansas Mission District. The next year he was sent to the Topeka District. As usual he continued his speculative land operations, buying, improving, and selling. In one case he did not sell, but gave. While at Topeka he and his son Thomas each acquired land near Baldwin. That year the Kansas Conference, meeting at Lawrence, voted to establish a college but did not provide for specific implementation. At the conclusion, the presiding Bishop, Osman Cleander Baker, was scheduled to go to Little Rock, and Still, the only preacher attending conference who had a buggy, was assigned to drive the Bishop to his destination. As they traveled the Bishop asked Still what the new college should be

called. "Baker", replied Still, and he promised that he would donate the land for the school. Thus it came about that Baker University was established in Baldwin, Kansas. Still not only provided the site, but he and his sons cut at the sawmill which Andrew Taylor Still operated in the region the timber for the first building. (21)

In 1860 Still became supernumerary, but he continued to preach until his health failed in November, 1862. His daughter Mary Margaretta completed his term, becoming thereby the first woman preacher in the Methodist Church in Kansas. Even after that, whenever his health permitted, he undertook individual preaching missions. Near the end of his life he conducted a revival at Centropolis which resulted in forty converts. He died on December 31, 1867 as a consequence of exposure at a funeral held five days earlier. (22)

Abram Still lived all of his life on the fringe of civilization, and he played a significant part in transforming the wilderness physically and spiritually. In various areas newly opened for settlement he shared in the manual work of felling trees, breaking sod, and putting up structures. He also spread the values of charity, forbearance, and kindness as he moved westward. More than once his faith in humanity was abused, but he persevered. He never turned anyone away from his door, one of his children testified. (23) He fed the hungry, clothed the naked, healed the sick, and led the lost to Christ. In regard to the great issue of slavery which tore apart his church and his nation, he took an early stand for

what he believed to be right, and he never wavered. He died, his most famous son declared, "rejoicing that he had been permitted to live to see all men in his country, whether white or black, free." (24)

NOTES

(1) E. R. Booth, History of Osteopathy and Twentieth-Century Medical Practice, rev. ed. (Cincinatti: Caxton Press, 1924), pp. 1-2. The Still family apparently used the spelling given here, although many of the records of the church spell the name "Abraham". I have followed the spelling of the name used by Still's most famous son, Dr. Andrew Taylor Still, founder of osteopathic medicine.

(2) James Moore Brown, The Captives of Abb's Valley: A Legend of Frontier Life, ed. Robert Bell Woodworth (n.p.; McClure Co., 1942), p. 43

(3) Ibid., pp. 44-45

(4) Booth, p. 2

(5) Andrew T. Still, Autobiography of Andrew T. Still, rev. and enl. (Kirksville, Mo: n.p., 1908), pp. 49-51

(6) Ibid., p. 51

(7) Ibid.

(8) History of Randolph and Macon Counties, Missouri (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1884), pp. 1210-1211.

(9) Still, pp. 28, 52

(10) Elbert Hubbard, A Little Journey to the Home of Andrew Taylor Still (n.p., n.d.); John Endacott, The Story of the Bronze Tablet Unveiled in the Methodist Episcopal Church at Eudora Kansas, May 3, 1925, reprinted October 1951 on the Occasion of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of the Indian School at the Mouth of the Wakarusa. See Bristol (Virginia) Herald Courier, November 17, 1949 for the story of the charcoal portrait.

(11) W.S. Woodard Annals of Methodism in Missouri. (Columbia, Mo.: E.W. Stephens, 1893), p. 155

(12) History of Adair, Sullivan, Putnam, and Schuyler Counties, Missouri Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1888), pp. 744-745.

(13) Still, pp. 18, 20

(14) Ibid., pp. 52-53

(15) Ibid., p. 53

(16) Endacott

(17) Reminiscences of Rovia (Marovia) Still Clark (1919?). (Transcribed by Deborah Prater for Andrew Taylor Still Memorial Library, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine, Kirksville, Mo. 1980)

(18) Ibid.

(19) Endacott

(20) Reminiscences of Rovia Clark; Still, pp. 59-62

(21) Joseph W. Thompson, "The 'Old Doctor' and Methodism". The Christian Advocate, Central Ed., August 23, 1934; Bristol Herald Courier, November 17, 1949.

(22) Brown, pp. 43-44

(23) Reminiscences of Rovia Clark

(24) Still, p. 54.

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